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With Concentration in Film and Audiovisual Aesthetics

Analog and Retro Aesthetics in the Digital Era of Music Videos and the Role of Nostalgia

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the recent trend of using analog and retro aesthetics in music videos in a context where the high definition digital aesthetic is the norm. The viewer experience of the feeling of nostalgia often associated with the analog and retro aesthetics is examined in depth. Finally, the thesis argues that use of analog and retro aesthetics and the associated nostalgia this evokes in the spectator can position and distinguish a music video in the market towards potential audiences.

By using a theoretical analytical approach, the research proposes answers to the primary research question: What are the meanings and purposes of using analog and retro aesthetics in contemporary music videos and in which way are they related to nostalgia? Subsequent questions arising from the research explore the differences in the use of analog and retro aesthetics by mainstream or alternative bands. Specifically, a distinction is made between the use of the aesthetic merely to follow a trend as opposed to using the aesthetic to emphasizing the message behind the music video. In the process of answering these questions, several concepts of aesthetics, media, marketing, audiences, heritage, identity and digital vs. analog medium are reviewed.

The research questions are answered through the identification of relevant theory, the analysis of six music video examples and a further discussion that applies the theory to the analysis findings. A personal audiovisual production of a music video for the debut of an alternative band is included to exemplify the use and purposes of the analog aesthetic in the current digital context.
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**Introduction and problem statement**

Today, the audiovisual world is going through a period where, from a technological point of view, the capacity to record video and sound is more accessible than ever before. Audiovisual technologies are cheaper, easier to learn and of higher quality than ever before. With photography digital cameras, filmmakers are able to create 4K videos that can be exhibited in big screens while retaining a high quality. In addition, professional editing suites are available for anyone who owns a computer. Every year there are a range of new cameras and software releases that improve the previous image-caption technology. Better image quality, cheaper price tags, smaller size devices are a few benefits. It seems there are no boundaries to further developments, and many predict that photography and moving image will evolve out of the 2D world to make virtual reality the norm.

Among this high definition reality, the retro aesthetic is prevalent in media audiovisual products. ‘The retro aesthetic’ describes images or videos that have been edited to look like if they had been recorded with an analog camera. These images can have many different characteristics; they can imitate film grain, black and white film, the look of a worn out old film, a color scheme typical of specific film types, a Polaroid film, a video tape, or an old format TV among many other alterations. We not only find this retro trend in audiovisual aesthetics but everywhere around us: we find it in fashion with vintage clothing, in design with inspirations of the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, in music with the return of the vinyl and record player. This is just a few of the areas where retro fever has been found in the last decade.

*Instagram* and its filters provide one such proof of how the retro aesthetic has become so popular. With just a click, this app makes it easy to transform a picture taken with a smartphone into an old film lookalike picture. With this popularization of the retro trend we may ask if the retro aesthetic has transcended into being a mainstream aesthetic. It can be said that it used to be a minority of the people who, for example, had access to HD cameras or CDs and music streaming, but would prefer to take pictures with old analog cameras and to listen to music on vinyl. But it is easy to see how using vintage cameras or *Instagram* and *Photoshop* analog filters is more and more popular. It has also become common to find vinyl, and even the music industry has adapted to this new demands by releasing new music in the old format. Thus, it is hard to categorize retro as a choice of a few anymore.

If the retro aesthetic is becoming a mainstream trend, does it mean that using it has lost value or meaning when it is used? How can we distinguish when it is used for merely fashionable reasons or as a medium to support a specific message?
Using the analog and retro aesthetics in the 21st century, from a stylistic and commercial point of view makes people connect with the (sometimes idealized) past. The admiration and collective longing for past times has a name: nostalgia. First defined by Johannes Hofer in 1688 as “a longing to return home”, nostalgia has become more relevant since the advertising world realized how it could easily be translated into sales.

Nostalgia is everywhere in our daily life, it has many uses and can serve to connect with many different things: it is a global feeling. The media use nostalgia because it is commonly a positive, desirable emotion that connects people together. Therefore, nostalgia is a very powerful marketing tool, and this longing and idealization of the past can be used to sell products that can help people satisfy that longing. The marketable potential of nostalgia began to be exploited by advertisers in the 1990s, and since then remakes of old movies, collector boxes, reunion tours for the music industry and countless vintage products have been imitated or reintroduced to trigger the idealized memories or connections we have with these objects that provoke positive, comforting and sentimental feelings. Nostalgia also augments brand value to established companies or products. As a clear example, one of the biggest brands in the world, Coca Cola, explodes this tool in its advertising campaigns and product design.

But it is not only physical products which can produce nostalgia. Audiovisual products are also responsible for introducing this feeling into our common imaginary. Artificially reproducing the analog medium and its imperfections is a way to bring back the images of the idealized past. Thus, we cannot talk about the popularity of the retro aesthetic without acknowledging the role of nostalgia in it. This thesis will trace the significance of using the retro analog aesthetic in media, specifically in music videos, and its relation to the feeling of nostalgia.

Music videos have always been a mirror of pop culture, creating of trends and referents for a wide audience. What we normally see in music videos of popular music stars is carefully curated, because it is watched by millions of people. Yet music videos are not a simple marketing tool for exhibiting the artists and increasing sales anymore. They are also a highly experimental platform where there are no guidelines or norms to follow. For instance, there are music videos where none of the band members appear, or videos where the music stops to have more time to develop the narrative or even including dialogues. There are music videos with such a high budget that could easily pass as an excerpt of a movie. There are also many experimental productions filmed with virtually non-existent budget.

Being nostalgic and the love of retro has become such a global phenomenon it is no surprise that many music videos, both from popular and alternative/independent bands and artists, have been inspired by it and can be categorized under this retro
aesthetic. Other artists have made retro their entire brand and identity, not only as audiovisual representation but as personal aesthetic. Do these videos use this aesthetic for the same purpose? Is the purpose of the video to inspire nostalgia as a tool to emphasize a message or is the purpose merely to catch the attention of the audience that finds this aesthetic attractive in order to position itself in the attention market?

Questioning why users choose to distort images in order to aesthetically mimic older images is interesting in the context of access to technological advances which create perfect images. And why so many people find these reproductions so aesthetically pleasing. The following pages will discuss different possible answers, by arguing that this phenomena is strongly connected to the human qualities found in the analog medium and to the belief that “past times were better”; the popular saying “good all days”, or what is commonly called nostalgia.

**Problem statement**

**Research question:**

What are the meanings and purposes of using analog and retro aesthetics in contemporary music videos and in which way are they related to nostalgia?

**Secondary questions:**

- Can retro be called alternative? Is it a fashion trend or a medium to express something?
- Do both alternative and commercial bands use this aesthetic with the same purpose?
- Attention market: does this aesthetic serve to reinforce the alternative target group?

**Hypothesis:**

The feeling of nostalgia is a powerful tool to engage the audience with a specific music video through the use of analog and retro aesthetics.

**Main argument:**

Music videos experiment with retro aesthetics and analog formats to create artistic videos that can have the purpose of addressing an audience attracted to the retro trend and to engage with the audience by creating and addressing feelings of nostalgia that arise by means of the positive connotations linked to analog mediums.
Methodology and Outline

With the research question and the basis of the research established in the previous section, this chapter will outline the methodology of the present thesis. The research questions defined above will be answered with a theoretical qualitative analysis of the relevant literature and applicable theories, and a further discussion with significant examples. A personal production is included to show how the theoretical findings can be practically applied.

Methodology

As stated in the introduction, the present research aims to find the significance of using analog retro aesthetics in music videos and how the aesthetic is related to nostalgia and can help positioning the video in the market. The study is based on the hypothesis that some music videos try to recreate an analog retro aesthetic to engage with their target audience by generating positive feelings of nostalgia. The research questions will be examined and answered following three steps of data collection:

1. Find relevant bibliography about music video analysis, retro aesthetics and marketing, the properties of the analog medium and nostalgia.

2. Examine a sample of music videos that use this aesthetic, find the motives and significance in the particular use of retro and analyze it in relation with the theory found. Videos will be sourced online.

3. Together with the theory and the music videos analysis, a music video will be produced, directed, and edited. The music video created aims to exemplify the hypothesis by showing how a band can visually present their message and brand with a retro analog aesthetic that serves to connect with the audience by means of nostalgia.

This thesis uses a qualitative methodology to answer a theoretical research question. Thus, the methodology used in this research is a theoretical qualitative analysis of literature. Applicable literature is selected and discussed by means of summarizing what is theoretically known about the relevant topic and the current academic state of the question, and put in context with descriptive material: the analysis of music videos.

The analysis of a sample of music videos and discussion using the retro aesthetic theories studied in the theoretical analysis will be used to answer in greater depth the secondary questions of the research, providing examples of the different uses and meanings. In order to link theory and practical analysis, the audiovisual
production attached will try to provide a conclusion to the research by showing how to further apply the findings of the previous sections.

Potential limitations within the research include that when talking about aesthetics, there is always a subjective point of view in stating what the meaning of a specific image is. Therefore, there will be generalizations when determining the response of the public towards an audiovisual product. A further study might take into consideration more musical aspects, for a more complete analysis of the music videos. However, this is beyond the scope of the current research. The priority is given to an aesthetical and formal analysis that focuses on the use and meanings of the analog and retro.

As a summary of the literature examined, several works are consulted to create the theoretical framework. The author whose work serves to create the base for music video analysis and music video aesthetics is Carol Vernallis. Other authors quoted are, among others: Andrew Goodwin; Stephen Brown and Jean Hogarty for retro aesthetic theory; Nicholas Rombes and Arild Fetveit for the analog medium properties, and Katharina Niemeyer and Svetlana Boym for nostalgia in media research.

The present research is significant in the context of film studies as the retro aesthetic has proven itself as a persistent trend with a strong presence in the visual media that general audiences consume, linked to images in the highest quality. Music videos showcase what the public commonly finds visually pleasing, and analog aesthetics are present in many contemporary music videos. This phenomenon calls for a deeper analysis on how and why we are still nostalgic for past mediums and formats.

The proposed outcome of the research is the present dissertation that will complete the program of the Master of Arts in Film and Media, and hopefully add some new perspectives in the current study of music video and its aesthetics.

Outline of the paper

After the summary of the ideas in which this research is based and the corresponding research questions formulated in the introduction, the next section serves as a theoretical framework that gives a background to the research by analyzing the current state of music videos studies and framing the context where theories of retro, the analog medium and nostalgia can relate to each other. Following the theory/contextualization section, six relevant music videos are analyzed as examples of the different uses and motives that the retro aesthetic has in relationship with its music, brand, audience, and the emotion of nostalgia. Afterwards, the attached audiovisual production created for this thesis is also
analyzed in the same criteria of the previous examples, and theoretically justified. A discussion will follow putting together the theoretical points and the findings in the analysis, offering answers to the questions set up in the introduction and discussing whether the initial questions and hypothesis were answered and confirmed. A conclusion closes the study with a summary of what the research has delivered and contributed in relation to the topic.
PART I: THEORY AND CONTEXTUALIZATION

Music videos

The study of music videos is relatively recent since it has not always been considered an independent genre from television studies and advertising. It can be approached by academics from many different fields as musicology, film studies, television studies, cultural studies, ethnic studies, communication studies... Carol Vernallis is one of the most recognized music video researchers in the field, with numerous publications written on the matter. In one of her works, Experiencing Music Video: Aesthetics and Cultural Context (2004), which is the ground book of this section, Vernallis explores the concept of aesthetics and cultural context in music videos.

Music videos are short audiovisual productions that accompany a song. The two main aims of a music video focus on the promotional nature of it, and the creation of the artist brand, recognizable to a potential target group. The digitalization of the music industry has provoked a shift in the consumption of music videos, moving from the television to the internet, specifically Youtube. This change in its platform distribution has opened the doors for experimentation with the medium, which makes difficult to fit new music videos into earlier definitions and classic characteristics. Restrictive definitions are not suitable in the current state of the genre because there are no limits to the format anymore; music videos don’t need to adapt to the duration of the song, they don’t necessarily need to cast the artist, and the promotion of the song is not always their main objective.

As Vernallis (2004) explains, music videos are a distinct genre, that has its own ways of organizing materials, exploring themes, and dealing with time, and it can be studied through a close analysis of the three elements that is composed of: music, image and lyrics. “In a music video, neither lyrics, music, nor image can claim a first origin. It can be unclear whether the music influences the image or the lyrics influence the music” (Vernallis, 2004: 79). Each of these elements in a music video is insufficient by itself, “music, image, and lyrics make room for one another and perform different functions at different hierarchical levels” (Vernallis, 2004: 285). Vernallis (2004) talks about the rear moment when “music, and lyrics come into relation in such a way that we feel we have come upon a special place. These moments are elusive, they come suddenly and unexpectedly, yet they are extremely powerful” (p. 97). It can be argued that what Vernallis divides in three elements, it can also be distinguished as two elements: pictures (that is the video images) and sound (that includes both the lyrics and the music).

Because of the many possible combinations between the different elements of music videos, there is no right or wrong visual interpretation of a song, and
directors can only give their personal reading (Vernallis, 2004). For establishing connections among pictures and sound, directors use different techniques. Vernallis (2004) mentions, as examples: “the image can be shaped so that it mimics the experiential qualities of sound [...] an image may match a sound through a symbolic, indexical, or iconic resemblance; sound, image, and lyrics can be placed in a metaphorical relation” (p. 175).

Music videos are an ever-changing medium that can be perceived as disorientating when analyzing them because they can have many different styles. At the same time this can also be considered one of its best creative qualities, because music video is a highly experimental genre, where one can find an exciting feeling that anything can happen: “Record companies and videomakers will try anything once, if only because novelty can break through the onslaught of commercial messages and grab the viewer’s attention” (Vernallis, 2004: 54).

The ultimate purpose of a music video is to promote a song. Ultimately, music always comes first and the video is normally produced having the song as a guide to create the images (Vernallis, 2004). Nevertheless, and because there are many different ways to interpret a song, many videos seem to have their own independent life from the song and lyrics. These videos can include dialogue, stop the music in order to develop the narrative, and even not including the performing artist.

For Vernallis (2004: 73), the settings of a video can help viewers to identify the music genre of a song, serving the same function as an album cover. She acknowledges the specificity of music videos as a medium by identifying some characteristics to specific genres. For example, inhabited, huge and fanciful spaces are used for alternative bands to display emotional and physical suffering, or street realistic scenes are typical scenarios for rap videos. The overuse of these specific settings can create stereotypes that will constrain creativity, and become a trend: “Certain motifs dominate videos for a few seasons only to be replaced by others” (Vernallis, 2004, 91).

Settings in a music video can be elements as location, color, texture, props or costumes, and can serve different functions as creating a sense of place, and also “making social points, showing the status of the artist in some community, foregrounding musical features or highlighting musical practices” (Vernallis, 2004: 76). The overuse of a specific setting can be used to counteract the lack of narrative in a video and Vernallis gives as an example the intense use of color in a video, that normally “blunts the viewer’s desire for narrative” (Vernallis, 2004: 75). In the same way, we can interpret her claim by considering that the over use of the analog aesthetic in specific videos could also serve to distract the viewer from the lack of narrative and other stronger elements in the video. The absence of a distinguishable mise-en-scène or creative performance on a video can be concealed
with an extensive use of the retro aesthetic, making it the most eye-catching element in the video – because as Vernallis have claimed, “a visual touch can help to define the music video’s world” (2004: 158).

**Analyzing music videos**

Since music videos combine very different mediums and also can raise cultural questions, analyzing them is a complicated task that involves taking into consideration several factors. The analysis of music videos has to first and foremost consider the relationships between the three major elements involved (music, lyrics and image). Moreover, matters of culture, identity, or genre, among others, also need to be addressed because “the music video has always incorporated and repurposed elements of other media” (Richardson, Gorbman & Vernallis, 2013: 508).

Vernallis (2004: 209) agrees with Goodwin (1992) that scholars have not yet found the way to analyze the structure of music videos by considering the musical codes, processes and techniques. Pordzik (2014) asserts that until today a coherent approach to music video analysis has not yet been found which can make possible to understand “this composite art form in a way that satisfyingly corresponds to the specificities of the modes and practices – text, voice, music and image editing – partaking in it” (p. 1). In the same line, Pordzik (2014) claims that Vernallis is the only scholar that has offered an analysis that “takes into consideration the different editing techniques, the musical and visual codes etc.” (p. 1), and provides “the means by which the genre can be structured in a way that matches basic critical standards” (p. 1).

Effectively, Vernallis (2004) wanted to change this lack of comprehensive analysis and in her book *Experiencing Music Video*, she offers a complex and extended inspection of Madonna’s music video *Cherish* by independently considering diverse elements of the video as: flow, continuity, contour, form, basic shape, motive, phrase, lyrics, timbre and texture, harmony and rhythm. The investigation is completed with a chronological analysis of its structure and narrative analysis, addressing questions of race, gender and sexuality.

Despite existing different methods to analyze music videos, Vernallis (2004) advocates for a series of general guidelines. As a starting point, she suggests that it is important to attend to “features held in common by many videos, and features particular to a single video” in order to begin to understand how music video works (p. 10). A detailed viewing of each video is also necessary, because just a quick look of the piece makes it impossible to determine the meaning, argument and other technicalities as the target group of the video. Also, Vernallis stresses the
influence film theory has in music video analysis based on the similarities of sound and image structures, although by film studies criteria music videos can be perceived as “failed narratives” (p. 209). Some other approaches can be found in which music videos are divided into four different types in order to categorize them for further analysis: narrative, conceptual, performative or mixed.

Although Vernallis (2004) does not offer a specific, quick or easy method for analyzing music video, the author sustains that “what a video has to say is located in the relation of all of its parts as it plays out in time—in a play between both the visual and musical codes” (p. 199). Another possible method of analysis Vernallis mentions is the “technique of commutation” (p. 202), in which we take, in this case, a music video, and change one of its cultural parameters, or substitute a formal feature such as color, setting, or sense of time, and later compare it with the original analysis to discover the differences. This analysis is interesting to apply in the case study proposed in this thesis because the visual feature that is common to all music videos analyzed is the analog and retro aesthetic. In order to find the meaning of its use, it is interesting to analyze what this aesthetic contributes to the meaning of the piece compared to a regular digital video image.

Also relevant to the research, is what Vernallis (2004) notes that is useful to do in order to understand the meaning of the specific elements and settings represented in the videos. She explains that it is important to pay attention to the frequency and specific place of a certain element appearing in a video. Applying this to the present research means that must be taken into consideration when and where the analog aesthetic appears in the video, if it is used continuously or if it only appears in particular moments.

To conclude the present section, the following quote from Vernallis (2004) serves to connect with the following sections on analog and retro aesthetic:

“Even with several analytic tools at hand, music video’s incommensurable structures may foreclose the possibility of a thorough analysis across media. Some processes in music video unfold in a temporal domain, whereas others occur in a spatial one. For example, in a particular music video, a song may suggest one musical practice, while the image reflects a style from another era. All media can suggest different senses of time (relaxed and lethargic or frantic and compressed, directed toward the past or to the future) and different rates of unfolding. The lyrics can point toward an occurrence several measures back or in the future, and they can contradict what the characters in the frame are doing” (p. 205).

By means of the following music video analysis, it is explained how the analog and retro aesthetic can change the temporal and spatial sense of the music video to make it look like recorded in another time and another place in the past where analog was the only recording option. This aesthetic does not always come
together with resonances of the past suggested in the lyrics, because as Goodwin (1992) notes, music videos don’t necessarily always point to the lyrics, but instead they normally serve to set a mood.

**Competition in the attention market**

In the previous sections, literature on music videos was reviewed, focusing on the importance of settings and other elements in music videos. These settings (location, color, texture, props, costumes, etc.) serve as a tool to classify music videos into a particular genre. The continuous use of the same elements sometimes creates patterns that make it easier for the public to recognize the audiovisual products that match their taste. As previously explained, nowadays music videos have no restrictions in form or content and it feels like anything is possible, thus they must compete in the music market trying to distinguish themselves from the rest of competitors using innovative tools but at the same time exploiting pre-existent mechanisms in order to make the video easily recognizable by its target group. On this note, Vernallis (2004) explains that: “the settings are often influenced by an appeal to the star's particular status” (p. 80) and to specific audiences. “Videos attempt to create a sense of community particularly by picking up the communal implications of genre. Record companies and videomakers use settings to connect their performers to musical communities” (p. 80).

Music videos, as any other media product, compete in the attention market and producers need to position the videos inside the market. Music videos still hold the inherent commercial and advertising feature of aiming to sell a product (the song and the artist) to a wide audience. Vernallis explains that “music videos are obliged to advertise their home genres [...] yet at the same time, they need to exhibit the new. This is lastly because they must withstand multiple viewings and appeal to a wide range of viewing audiences” (2014: 191). In order to accomplish this, they will use a combination of similar and distinct features in comparison with other media and other music videos that will position them in the market. Similar features are used because all videos have some elements that can remind to previous videos and thus be categorized in the same way. On the other hand, differences are explored because the more original and creative in the use of its settings is the video, the more attractive and interesting it will be for the audience to watch it and remember it.

In the attention market, people orientate themselves in regard to their values and by doing so they are at the same time positioning themselves against the opposite values. Thus, by positioning in the attention market people are building a unique spot where they belong in opposition to other ones. The same applies when positioning a product in the attention market, which will be occupying a space with
values that are opposite to other products. A music video can attempt to use its elements to find the place that corresponds to the fans of the specific music genre and potential new listeners, but by choosing the elements that will make it attractive to some people it is at the same time putting itself away from the values of other parts of the audience. “Though the kind of empathy that music video elicits is undirected and diffuse, music video viewers may experience a sense of connection to the communities whose music they listen to and watch” (Vernallis, 2014: 97)

The hypothesis that is examined in the present research is that the music videos analyzed are using the analog aesthetics that suggest nostalgic feelings to position themselves in a specific side of the attention market where its target group belongs, and at the same time differentiate themselves from other audiences. The target group that most of them are argued to belong to is an alternative audience, in the opposite of commercial and mainstream music audiences. At the same time, mainstream audiences also want to distinguish themselves in their specific market and a case is presented where the analog and retro aesthetic is employed in order to be perceived as “alternative” inside their mainstream category. That means that when the premise is to differentiate inside in your specific market, everything is valid.

Vernallis (2004) explains further how music videos and its images connect to culture and social content. She claim that “to gauge the meaning of a music or image, viewers can draw upon a large reservoir of cultural associations; these connections have sources like opera, church hymns, radio, vaudeville, pulp magazines, film posters, magazine ads, and so forth” (p. 192). “Music videos present objectionable images of class, gender, ethnicity, disability, and sexuality. When we come across a particular video, however, it seems harder to make an assertion about what kind of cultural work it does” (p. 75). Although it is not always an easy task, it is necessary to find the cultural and social associations that music videos have in order to be able to distinguish where in the attention market they belong to.

**The retro aesthetic**

Retro can be defined as “old or old-fashioned”, or “going backwards” by the Cambridge Dictionary (2013), and it relates to what imitates or recalls the likes of a passed time. Brown (2001) explains that the origins of the retro trend are connected to specific demographical parts of the population. The ageing of the baby boom generation seems to have “prompted a psychic return to the comforts, certainties and conflict-free times of childhood or early adolescence” (p. 10). Brown discusses that preoccupations of the past are still relevant to today's
consumers because of “long-term migration patterns” (p. 11) that contributed to a “consequent loss of rural rootedness, community spirit and sense of place” (Brown, 2001: 11).

Hogarty (2017) claims that the retro phenomenon has not yet been studied from an academic perspective and that “there is a complete absence of a sustained argument on the ubiquity of retro and nostalgia within contemporary popular music culture” (p. 1). However, the field of marketing has done its approaches to the topic. Marketing extensively uses the notion of retro in order to sell products by highlighting past qualities to rise the value of a brand. Brown (2001) has written about *retromarketing*, studying its qualities and trying to give an answer to the question of why people seem to be so attached to the past.

Because marketing is customer oriented, Brown (2001: 6) explains that it reflects on the customer preferences, and that is why nowadays retro is found everywhere on the advertising world. Brown also points to the difficulty faced by marketing students with the lack of a consensus on the definition of retro. Despite this definitional problem, Brown proposes three different categories of the retro phenomenon: *Repro, Repro Nova and Repro de Luxe*:

“Repro pertains to reproducing the old pretty much as it was, albeit meanings may have changed in the meantime. Repro Nova refers to combining the old with the new, usually in the form of old-style styling with hi-tech technology. Repro de Luxe, on the other hand, involves second helpings of the past, insofar as it revives or reproduces something that traded on nostalgia to start with, neo-nostalgia, in other words” (Brown, 2001: 6).

The category that mainly concerns this present research is *Repro Nova* because the analysis will combine old analog technology with new digital technology. Nevertheless, the present study argues that the element of nostalgia is brought up by this combination, and thus the nostalgic element of what Brown categorizes as *Repro Luxe* is also present.

As it will be discussed in the next chapter, the importance of protecting marks of the past and what it is not conserved digitally is also an explanation of the retro fascination. Brown declares that this as a characteristic of “societies in turmoil, those experiencing troubles, turbulence and transformation” and that nowadays there is an “ecological concern” (p. 12) caused by environmental catastrophes that has translated into the need of conserving, restoring and protecting the past. The analog formats are perishable and there is a responsibility to preserve the art that has been created in this format from natural catastrophes and the passing of time.

It is also necessary for Brown (2001) to mention postmodernism when defining what is retro and its origins. He argues that the postmodernist claim that all stylistic innovation is impossible because everything is already been done shows
“nostalgic inclinations, historical bricolage, a marked loss of faith in progressivist ideologies” (p. 12). As a result of this assumption, postmodernism turns to the concept of retro when suggesting that the only solution left to create new styles is to alter and play with what it was done in the past and to choose the “tried-and-tested over the new-and-improved” (p.13).

While we cannot deny that nowadays retro is thoroughly used in marketing because its potential as a valuable product that sells, Brown (2001) does not consider that this means a defeat of marketing strategies. Every cultural product is in a way making synthesis of the past and the current time, and mediating in the conflict between past and present. Thus, re using strategies that worked in the past and going back to the beginning are valid ways for organizations to find success, and Brown suggests that retro is especially useful for “softening the hard sell”, which means that the retro filter can cover the otherwise clear rip-offs and reused material with its “rose-tinted, soft-focus lens of nostalgia” (p. 10). Although the golden age that retro evokes does not actually exists in real life, but rather in the Hollywood imaginary, this image is in all ways over used, exaggerated and exploited by the sellers of heritage (Brown, 2001: 10). This way, using retro can be interpreted as utilizing heritage in order to humanize the present (Brown, 2001: 10). On the next section, the human properties resembled in the materiality of retro aesthetics are studied in depth.

Vernallis (2004) writes about the power of retro to connect the past with heritage and cultural associations from an aesthetic perspective, rather than a marketing one as authors like Brown do. The retro aesthetic is everything that evokes old media and formats (analog film, VHS, Super 8, etc.) and can be easily recognized by means of an image with grain, or imperfections as dust, holes, black bumpy frames, visible film perforations, rewinding lines, faded colors, light leaks, etc. What it interests the present research is when these alterations are digitally imitated with software in video files filmed with digital cameras.

Back to Vernallis (2004) and her thoughts on the use of retro aesthetic, she claims that the grainy look is used in order to connect with some music that remembers the past (like Amy Winehouse or Lana del Rey) and that “muted colors and raw quality simply reaffirm our cultural associations with the music” (p. 166). Lana del Rey’s predilection (or obsession) for the retro trend and the analog look, found in all her music videos, will be later discussed. These music videos use “shift in color or a move to black and white, greater diffusion, slo-mo, Super-8 or grainy film, as well as expressive props and settings” to give a feeling of being in the past (p. 134). Vernallis (2004) enumerates four main reasons for the use of the retro aesthetic:

1. Grain and changes in texture produce a “visceral response” (p. 127) that can be used as a substitute for a story. As argued in the previous section, the
overuse of the retro look can be employed to cover up the lack of narrative in a music video.

2. Grain and changes in color and scratches can serve to create associations with alternative culture, experimental filmmaking, and early-seventies fashion.

3. These visual shifts, when repeated or used dramatically, can be used to visually create a “sense of continuity that matches the song’s flow” (p. 159) and “distinguish the song’s sectional divisions” (p. 163).

4. The use of analog aesthetics, when the expected is a digital look, can serve as a tool to catch the viewer’s attention.

In addition to this four points retrieved from Vernalli’s work, an extra point is worth adding by Højbjerg (2011):

5. The emotional tonality “promotes the emotional basic mood of the audience” (p. 69). Feelings are part of the aesthetic experience, thus the grain and texture of the retro style also have the function of triggering emotions in the viewers’ minds.

Before explaining more in depth the concept of nostalgia and its relationship with retro, it is worth mentioning that when using retro aesthetics to bring back the past, the feeling of nostalgia is unavoidable. Hogarty (2017) finds in retro fans the rise of a nostalgic generation that longs for times that they did not have the chance to live, and thus they borrow these desirable lives by consuming retro (p. 1). He finds it curious and worth to study the fact that popular music was known in the past for selling images of youth and future, but nowadays popular music tends to focus on the past by means of “the current retro and nostalgia buzz” (p. 8). For Hogarty (2017), fans and consumers of what he calls “the nostalgia industry” (p. 137) perceive the re-appropriation of old formats as their way of “restoring the authenticity and sense of futurism that they feel has been lost or, rather, stolen from them in an era of downloadable music, reality music TV shows and retro culture” (p.137). The author concludes saying that, by “seeking to remember the twentieth century, these fans are actually seeking to remember the future” (p. 137).

At the present time, it is hard to visualize an immediate future where retro is not a trend anymore. To conclude this section, Brown’s thoughts on the matter of the future of retro are worth to present:

“While there is no doubt that the twentieth/twenty-first centuries’ cusp is characterized by retromarketing mania, a neo-romantic preference for the past over the present, such commercial nostalgia is not confined to centuries’ ends. On the contrary, it is ever-present. Indeed, the recent
seventies revival conveniently overlooks the fact that the seventies themselves were a remarkably retro-orientated era” (2001, 14).

Analog and digital – Materiality and immateriality

The retro mania explained in the previous section does not only extend to physical products, but also to audiovisual media products. The fascination for old retro aesthetics translates in a desire to reuse the formats that were the norm before the digital era: analog cameras, film and VHS. The problem that retro revival lovers face is that reproducing original analog images is not as easy as it used to be 20 years ago. Film roll is expensive to buy and to develop, and much more expensive and rare in video than in photography. Cult film cameras raise high bids in the online market and photographers try their luck in second-hand stores to find functioning analog cameras. Thus, the solution to the problem is easy to find in an era where computer software is so evolved that a computer can create any kind of image. Photoshop is able to recreate the look of hundreds of different models of film cameras, and countless less sophisticated programs can imitate some basic grain, light leaks, faded colors, black and white and sepia, or Polaroid format. The popular smartphone app Instagram makes very easy to transform a low quality mobile phone picture in a quite realistic analog picture. By offering only analog lookalike filters, its goal to make the retro look mainstream and globally accessible is very clear. In a video, it is easy to fake analog film when editing in the professional suites like Avid or Adobe Premiere, and it is also possible to buy software solely created with this aim like Filmconvert, that effectively emulates analog film.

The efforts that media and creative industries do nowadays to create products that imitate analog aesthetics are astonishing. Finding videos filmed with the highest quality digital cameras to be later transformed by lowering its high definition images to imitate old, outdated technology seems ironic. Nevertheless, there is much more behind this fashion than purely trending reasons since the analog reconstruction serves many purposes. Before finding out more about this ‘imperfect’ trend, the role of the analog in the digital shift and the relationship between the two technologies is examined.

In the 1990s, discussions on the topic of the digital shift started, and film personalities as George Lucas and Roger Ebert proclaimed their preference for the new technology in both video cameras and projecting equipments (Rombes, 2009). Rombes (2009: 1) claims that the change from analog to digital has two levels; symbolic and literal. The symbolic one refers to the clean and perfect replication quality of digital that is possible to make because the image and sound are composed by numbers, while the analog medium adds imperfections in the
material every time a copy is made. The literal level addresses to the aesthetical differences of analog and digital images, like for example using the word digital to refer to a “certain stance, a certain look betrayed by the image” (Rombes, 2009: 1).

The cinematographer John Bailey (in Rombes, 2009) has claimed “one thing that is terrifying but also very magic about [analogue] film is that it’s an inexact science. It’s analogue, it’s unpredictable. You don’t always know what you’re going to see and things sometimes turn out differently than what you think” and digital video, on the contrary, is like “looking at your negative as you’re exposing it (p. 18).” “Digital video might be more spontaneous, but it is no more risky than analogue, which has traditionally required a leap of faith and delayed gratification: there is no immediate capture of reality in analogue, but rather captured images that need to be processed” (Rombes, 2009: 18).

Digital recording has doubtlessly an advantage over the analog, and that is that a digital recording can be copied as many times as desired with 100% accuracy, unlike analog recordings that introduce minor errors and will wear down the original copy (Leo Enticknap in Rombes, 2009). The physical materiality of the analog medium is evident due to the constant risk of combustion that old film cans entailed. On the other hand, the immateriality of the digital ones and zeros makes it possible to safely preserve films in archives, this “suggests the potential for a strange sort of continuity between past and present, when nothing ever really gets old” (Rombes, 2009: 33). Rombes (2009) sees in the loss of quality of analog mediums a “thing of beauty” (p. 36) that can resemble the lost of accuracy of the human memory because, he asks, “isn’t memory, in a very real sense, always partial, corrupted, corroded, distorted?” (p. 36).

For Hogarty (2017), technology is a key determinant of retro culture and her findings on how popular retro music perception has changed in the digital era with the shift from analog (vinyl) to digital (CD, mp3) are also relevant to the discussion. She claims that “new technologies, however, not only stimulate different forms of awareness, they also generate new cultural environments” (p. 43). Hogarty (2017) points at two different sides of the discussion: on the one side, the immaterial dimension of the digital format and on the other side, the material analog formats. The older formats are “perceived as more authentic and representative of the “golden age” of the mid- to late twentieth century, whereas immaterial formats are perceived as inauthentic and symbolic of the supposedly dystopian and soulless twenty-first century” (Hogarty, 2017: 103).

Connolly and Evans (2014) also talk about the materiality of the format versus the immateriality of it. For them, the materiality of the analog medium is comparable to the digital glitch, because digital technology also occurs into errors but of a different kind than analog. Analog visual trademarks as “white noise, flickering, fuzzy imagery, high-frequency buzzing and rolling video [...] have been replaced by
digital counterparts: broken and bleeding pixels, ‘no signal’ screens, error messages and system crashes” (Connolly and Evans, 2014: 54). This aesthetical appropriation “acquires a renewed power and potency [...] to challenge technological, aesthetic, social and economic assumptions of the present” (p. 53).

Connolly and Evans (2014) identify what they call the *glitch moment*(um) as “the initial potential that an unexpected or disrupting media experience has to transform a user’s understanding of a technology” (p. 56). This glitch brings to light the illusion of the digital screens’ materiality that is not as perfect as they claim to be. These technological failures show that “our control of technology is an illusion, revealing digital tools to be only as perfect, precise, and efficient as the humans who built them” (p. 54). Because the digital has become the norm, the analog materiality has gained a new meaning, and “the saturation of the efficient digital screen in daily life has programmed our expectations of what to produce and consume from technological devices. When hybridized with analog output devices, digital tools can generate unexpected aesthetic experiences that exploit our residual memories of the analog era while also confronting and revealing flaws within the assumptions of our digital tools and creative productions” (Connolly and Evans, 2014: 54).

For Rombes (2009), the mistakes and imperfections of the analog medium in cinema showcase a humanism that counteracts with the “numerical clarity and disembodiment of the digital code” (p. 8). Furthermore, the new tendency in digital media to imitate the analog flaws aims to “counterbalance the logic of perfection” (p. 2) that characterizes the digital by adding human mistakes that project humanity. This humanity is also revealed in the ageing of the analog medium, with its “missing frames, pops, hisses or graininess” that act as a “reminder of the history and material foundation of the film’s creation” (p. 9). Rombes (2009) believes that digital special effects in movies can create nostalgia for analog special effects that were less realistic but at the same time more impressive because they were not made digitally. He adds that the “nostalgia for these conditions emerges as digital technologies make it possible to ‘scrub’ away these imperfections, which betrayed traces of the human beings who made the films and owned the theatres” (p. 10). The amount of human trace found in analog films by means of errors is less perceivable in digital movies, where it is hard to find a single mistake or error. Normally, that precision is what the audience attributes to machines and computers.

The imperfect image
Digital media aims to be flawless and has achieved so far the highest quality in regard to the image, impossible to imagine with previous technologies. However, why then is the imperfect analog medium aesthetic so attractive? Some answers have been given to this question. First, the flaws that are characteristic of the
analog are perceived as human trails that connect the product with its creators. In that way, human errors and imperfections are more similar to the characteristic flaws of analog medium than to the digital look, and as Rombes (2009) sums up, “mistakes must be our answer to the machines of perfection that we ourselves have built” (p. 156). Secondly, the fact that the analog medium does not last forever and that it can never be reproduced as spotlessly as the first copy can also be seen as a similitude with the reality that we experience as humans, and that is an extra value that adds to something unique and perishable. Finally, digital images lack randomness and thus, perfect results are expected, giving no space for surprises. But randomness and surprises are two elements inherent to art and creativity, and when these are removed, it is harder to find the uniqueness and authenticity that makes an image stand out among others. The digital era promised “clarity, high definition, a sort of hyperclarified reality” but the digital image is threatening “the fragility of the traditional logic of the image” and thus, “at the heart of the perfect digital image, is a secret desire for mistakes, for randomness” (Rombes, 2009: 1). For these reasons, nowadays there is an ongoing search for the imperfect image, and faking it is one of the options in order to achieve it.

Academics have researched the attraction for imperfections that characterizes the analog medium described in the previous section (grain, light leaks, white noise, flickering, fuzzy imagery...). Two concepts are especially relevant in this study: precarious aesthetic and medium-specific noise. In his article Precarious, Foster (2009) uses the word precarious to describe what he sees as a common condition in the art of the past decade: “No concept comprehends the art of the past decade, but there is a condition that this art has shared, and it is a precarious one. Almost any litany of the machinations of the last ten years will evoke this state of uncertainty...”, and assures that “social instability is redoubled by an artistic instability” (p. 1). Also in 2009, Bourriaud claimed that “the precarious represents a fundamental instability that inscribes itself into the structure of the work itself and reflects a general state of aesthetics” (p. 3). He believes that art has adapted to the precarious aesthetic by developing means of “speed, intermittence, blurring and fragility” (p. 3) and identifies three patterns in precarious aesthetics: “transcoding, flickering and blurring” (p. 3). Bourriaud has also mentioned Bauman’s characterization of the present as a “precarious life, lived under conditions of constant uncertainty [...], a society of generalized disposability, driven by the horror of expiry” (p. 3).

The concept of medium-specific noise is extensively explored by Fetveit (2013):

“The aesthetic of medium-specific noise employs symptoms of wear and tear and errors or malfunctions characteristics of specific media as deliberate means of artistic expression, that have served artistic visions in numerous productions and will continue to do so. In the service of this aesthetic,
technologies are developed to enhance and artificially produce such medium-specific noises and malfunctions” (p. 1).

The specific noise of the analog medium with its low resolution, poor sharpness, ruined negatives and other imperfections is thoroughly employed for artistic purposes, and creators can perceive it as the ideal aesthetic to express their message. For Steyerl (2009), “the poor image is no longer about the real thing—the originary original. Instead, it is about its own real conditions of existence: about swarm circulation, digital dispersion, fractured and flexible temporalities. It is about defiance and appropriation just as it is about conformism and exploitation. In short, it is about reality” (p. 7). The deliberate use of older technologies can also be seen as a way of “reflecting on consumption practices and historical position—or, for some critics, motivated by nostalgia” (Richardson, Gorbman & Vernallis, 2013: 24).

**Nostalgia**

**What is nostalgia?**
Nostalgia is defined by Niemeyer (2014) as “the name we commonly give to a bittersweet longing for former times and spaces.” (p. 1). For Boym (2002), it is “the longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed. Nostalgia is a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one’s own fantasy” (p. 13) thus, the object of loss is not present anymore. The author adds to the definition that: “it is a yearning for a different time—the time of our childhood, the slower rhythms of our dreams [...] in a broader sense, nostalgia is a rebellion against the modern idea of time, the time of history and progress” (p. 14).

Boym (2002) differentiates between two main types of nostalgia: restorative and reflective. Restorative nostalgia “stresses nostos (home) and attempts a transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home” (p. 18), without identifying itself as nostalgia “but rather as truth and tradition” (p. 18). On the other hand, reflective nostalgia “thrives on algia (the longing itself) and [...] dwells on the ambivalences of human longing and belonging and does not shy away from the contradictions of modernity” (p. 18). The type of nostalgia that is relevant in this study is reflective, the longing in itself for what it brings connections with the past and feelings of belonging. Boym (2002) says about reflective nostalgia that “it lingers on ruins, the patina of time and history, in the dreams of another place and another time and its relation to the past and historical thinking” (p. 41).

The term nostalgia finds its origin back in the seventeenth century and can be traced to the medical dissertation of the Swiss student Johannes Hofer, where the term was categorized as a curable disease. In the 1960’s, Sprengler (2009) claimed
that “nostalgia became entrenched as the word of choice to describe that was, by then, perceived as a national obsession with the material, visual and popular culture of bygone times” (p. 28). Boym (2002) points at “the rapid pace of industrialization and modernization” as the main agents that provoked an increase in the “intensity of people’s longing for the slower rhythms of the past, for social cohesion and tradition” (p. 30). Nowadays, nostalgia is a complex term that applies to “all kind of media contexts: historical, social, political, economic and aesthetic” (Niemeyer, 2014: 6). As Brown (2001) claims, “nostalgia is not what it used to be since it is no longer a thing of the past” (p. 4), hence, it is necessary to make a deeper analysis of the functions and uses that nostalgia has in the present.

The functions of nostalgia

Niemeyer (2014) believes that nostalgia has a deeper meaning than just being a fashion or a trend, because it is related to “a way of living, imagining and sometimes exploiting or (re)inventing the past, present and future” (p. 2) and deals both with positive and negative relations to time and space. For Tierney (2013), this link to the past is positive and more constructive than destructive. Since nostalgia is something universal that we can all relate to, it can be used as a tool to engage people with a feeling of “being part of a community or a group” and thus “longing can make us more empathetic towards fellow humans” (in Niemeyer 2014: 10).

Boym (2002) also studied the link between nostalgia and the past, pointing out at the role of nostalgia as a “defense mechanism in a time of accelerated rhythms of life and historical upheavals”. The author claims that “nostalgia is a traditional companion to progress” (p. 11). On the same line, Niemeyer quotes Boyer (2013) argument that “the presence of a renewed nostalgia is found in situations where there is a crisis of temporality” (in Niemeyer 2014: 2). Nostalgic feelings are also linked to a lack of historical knowledge. Thus, nostalgia can be used to connect to the history and to the past. Boym (2002) explained that “the fantasies of the past, determined by the needs of the present, have a direct impact on the realities of the future” (p. 8).

Buljubašić (2016) has studied the relationship of nostalgia and heritage. He quotes Garey’s claim that “heritage discourse is embedded with nostalgia, or that nostalgia is a mechanism of producing heritage and tradition” (2009: 39). Heritage discourse and nostalgia are important for creating an identity in the current cultural and social spheres (Buljubašić, 2016). Thus, nostalgia can function as an identity maker by means of heritage discourses. Smith and Akagawa (2009) claim that “heritage is intimately linked with identity [...] a key consequence of heritage is that it creates and recreates a sense of inclusion and exclusion” (p. 7). For Buljubašić (2016), this means that “heritage creates a space for identification and belonging as it shapes new communities” and those new communities “are created at the intersection of
Buljubašić (2016) concludes by saying that “a perceived loss or a lack (of authenticity, community, tradition, and homeland) opens up a space for new identifications. Thus, it is my claim here that quests for identity are presently being made in a context always already infused by global nostalgic and heritage discourses” (p. 3).

Nostalgia has a big role in the audience’s mind and elements of the past are used to connect with the audience. This idea relates to what it was discussed in the previous section Competition in the attention market, where it was explained how distinctive elements are used in the media in order to position the product inside their specific market. By using nostalgia inducing elements as analog aesthetics, music videos are making easier to grasp the style and identity of the audience they aim to attract.

Nostalgia can also be seen as a homage or tribute. Bringing back certain elements from the past helps to revive specific qualities and find a new meaning in current contexts. For example, new bands can benefit from having references or similarities in their music to old classic groups that a lot of people admire, and thus helping to target a potential audience.

**Media and nostalgia**

In the previous section, some the uses and definitions of nostalgia have been reviewed, such as nostalgia as a tool to connect to the past, producing heritage and tradition where there is a lack of historical knowledge, creating inclusion and sense of identity, and helping to position in the attention market. All these functions are relevant to the media, and in some way that explains why this term and the media are so linked nowadays or, as Niemeyer (2014) puts it, why media has an obsession with nostalgia.

Bolter and Grusin assert (2000) that “new media always define themselves in relationship to earlier technologies of representation” (p. 28). It has become a usual feature for all present media to look at the past and to learn other media mechanisms that worked well back then and imitate them. The relation of media and nostalgia has increased with the development of new technologies that have allowed expressions of nostalgia to acquire new dimensions, as Niemeyer (2014) explains:

“Media produce contents and narratives not only in the nostalgic style but also as triggers of nostalgia. Media, and new technologies in particular, can function as platforms, projection places and tools to express nostalgia. Furthermore, media are very often nostalgic for themselves, their own past, their structures and contents. [...] Nostalgia, in turn, offers a reflection on mediation, media and their related technologies. In this sense, media practice
becomes an essential element of nostalgia, increasing with the recent development of new communication technologies” (p. 7).

According to Schrey (2014), “media can serve as a means of virtually accessing the past, and are thus an important resource for cultural memory [...] often establishing the precondition for a nostalgic perspective on things past (and present)” (p. 29). Nostalgia can be part of the content in media or a representational style. Moreover, media can become the object of nostalgia, “in this case, the sentiment can be directed towards their specific medial constitution, their materiality, the aesthetics resulting from these factors, or all these combined” (Schrey, 2014: 29).

When analyzing the relationship between media and nostalgia, it is worth to mention the pre-fabricated nostalgia that different media produce in the current digital age. The audience’s lack of historical knowledge is filled with mediated and distorted messages that act as memories of a past that was not personally experienced by the audience and that becomes idealized. Rombes (2009) call this phenomenon residual culture and quotes Williams’ definition as “experiences, meanings and values... [which are] lived and practiced on the basis of the residue – cultural as well as social – of some previous social formation (2001: 170)”. Media is trying to preserve past memories at any cost, and the only way to do this when they are already gone is to artificially restore them (Niemeyer, 2014).

**Analog nostalgia in digital media culture**

There are hints of nostalgia in the act of using today’s technology with the purpose of imitating old analog aesthetics in digitally recorded videos. There is nostalgia both for the analog physicality and for the times when this technology was the only option available, as well as cultural and social aspects distinctive of the analog era.

Schrey (2014) defines analog nostalgia as “the longing for what is assumed to be lost in the continuing process of digitisation that accounts for contemporary media culture’s widespread romanticising and fetishising of analogue media” (p. 28). He sees nostalgia as “an integral aspect of our culture of preserving and storing” in a current context that he calls ‘planned obsolescence’, characterized by “unprecedented and ever-accelerating media technological transitions and of increasingly mediated life environments” (p. 27). Analog nostalgia appears in “works that quote certain characteristics typically associated with analogue inscription within digital media in a more or less self-reflexive fashion” (p. 28). These works, thus, are appreciating analog aesthetical aspects that were once considered as disadvantages (Schrey, 2014).

Rombes (2009) highlights the “tendency in digital media [...] to reassert imperfection, flaws, an aura of human mistakes to counterbalance the logic of
perfection that pervades the digital” (p. 2). Rombes (2009) believes that there is a paradox in the nostalgic longing for technological elements that don’t exist anymore but they did at some point, and brings as an example the frustration that filmmakers felt back then with the errors, hisses and scratches in the negatives. Boym’s reflective nostalgia, defined in previous sections, can be found in the materiality of the analog medium, in the videos that mix “the grainy patina of 8-mm film, the authentic effect of a hand-held home movie camera and the archive footage [...] and black and white scenes” (Jirsa, 2015: 19).

For Rombes (2009), today’s analog nostalgia exists both for the aesthetic warmth of the analogue medium and for the physical experience of going to the movies. The experience of watching a film has changed and now movies can come directly to the spectator via the Internet, and home theatre systems. Rombes (2009) believes that the past “boredom” of going to the cinema to escape the heat and watch the slow takes of the films that used to be projected, has been replaced by “the fast-forward and rewind capabilities of the VCR, and then the instant-everywhere of digital, which leaves no space for boredom” (p. 20).

Schrey (2014) has tried to find the main reasons why the specific noise of analog media is being imitated and revaluated in today’s digital context. He finds a similitude in analog nostalgia with the fascination of ruins and its “fragmentary aesthetics” that resulted in the constructions of artificial ruins, back in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (p. 28). Similarly, analog film seems to appear ruined in specific places where is has previously been replayed and rewound the most, containing the images that fascinated the viewer (Robnik, 2005). These analog malfunctions or “textual ruins” are, for Schrey (2014) “more than just indicators of age, as they can also be understood as traces of appreciation or pleasure” (p. 35). As Doane (2007) summarizes, “what is lost in the move to the digital is the imprint of time, the visible degradation of the image” (p. 117). These aging traces can now be simulated digitally but, unlike the real analog medium, they do not lead to the dysfunction of the film. Thus, Schrey (2014) concludes that “analogue nostalgia simulates a process of aging that has not happened yet, and never will happen. The purpose of this digitally simulated analogue decay seems to be the signification of presence: as it simulates exactly the life or soul that the digital was always accused of lacking” (p. 36).

Marks (2002: 152) explain that analog nostalgia “expresses a desire for indexicality and a retrospective fondness for the “problems of decay and generational loss that analog video posed”. Schrey (2014) believes that although it could seem like analog nostalgia is a rejection of digital technology, it is “exclusively about the digital remediation of analogue aesthetics within the digital”, in another words, “analogue nostalgia is directed towards the noise, not the signal”. The author adds that “in the broadest sense, it operates as a strategy of
re-enchanting an object through aesthetic de-familiarisation as it is characterised by deliberate imperfection” (p. 34).

Rombes (2009) concludes his work on nostalgia by looking at its future and asking: “are we to be tempted into nostalgia for the digital so soon after its appearance? Do we already yearn for the good old days of early DV?” (p. 64). There is no way to know if the next step will be nostalgia for the early digital technology, but there have indeed appeared some signs that this could happen. As an example, consumers’ nostalgia for the first models of mobile phones has lead the company Nokia to announce that they will relaunch their famous model 3310, which became so popular in the year 2000. What seems harder is to imagine a future where the expressions of digital aesthetics are missed and recreated as an object of global nostalgia. For the moment, the analog aesthetic is expected to remain part of the collective visual imaginary, both the real and the faked one.

Expressions of nostalgia for the specific noise of the analog medium can be found in all media around us. More specifically, they can be found in current music videos. The present section has put into context the different implications of this phenomenon in regard to aesthetic theories, media, creative industries, marketing, the digital shift, social and cultural aspects as identity and heritage, and the search for a more human technology. The next step in the present research is to apply the theory found to the analysis of examples of current music videos where their creators chose to edit digital videos to look like analog film, and discuss the meanings behind it.
Part II: ANALYSIS OF MUSIC VIDEOS

The analysis of the following music videos focuses on the aesthetic aspects of the images in the videos. Although the music and the lyrics are also relevant to be reviewed in order to obtain a complete analysis of the video, these are mainly analyzed in relation to the image. The aim of the present analysis is to point at different uses of the analog and retro aesthetics and to observe in which way they are linked to feelings of nostalgia. Also relevant to be mentioned in the analysis is whether the artists are considered part of the mainstream or independent music industry, and how the video’s aesthetics help to position the band in the market towards their intended audience. The music video produced for the present research is also analyzed, taking into account the same parameters. The making of the production is explained in detail. The analysis of each video tries to tackle down the following parameters:

- Description of the analog retro aesthetic in the video (how often elements belonging to the aesthetic appear and where in the song).
- How does the use of this aesthetic relate to the image/brand of the artist and previous music videos?
- In which way is the video suggesting nostalgia?
- Are there nostalgic connections between the images and the lyrics?
- Does the retro aesthetic situate the video in another time or place than the current one?
- How does the analog aesthetic, together with other elements, position the video in the market?

Music video analysis

Lana del Rey – Love (2017)

Since Lana del Rey’s first album in 2012, Born to Die, all her music videos have included an analog and retro aesthetic in one way or another. Her music videos are a very good example of how video aesthetics can serve to highlight the brand of an artist. Lana del Rey is probably the biggest representation of romanticization of nostalgia in mainstream music. Her style, clothes, lyrics, music and pictures revolve around an idealized past time of unlived memories. The same retro elements have been repeated and exploited in all her music videos, to the point where there is very little room for surprises in her new videos, yet each one gets millions of views. This has also contributed to upholding a consistent personal brand.

The music video of Love, from her last album Lust for Life (2017), follows the same retro path of her previous videos. In Love, we find two parallel story lines: one
features Lana Del Rey singing on a stage that could well be a TV set, and the other one consists of diverse video shots of various couples in different times, all of them appearing to be part of the audience in Lana’s concert. Halfway through the video, Lana del Rey is singing in what it seems to be the Moon, and the young couples are floating in space inside their vintage cars. At the end, the characters land on a different planet where they find what it looks like an American diner while the singer watches them having fun from the Moon.

The analog aesthetic is present in the entire duration of the video. The image is grainy and the whites are overexposed, making her stand out and glow in the dark. The aesthetic of the video imitates film, faking its characteristic dust and small imperfections. The corners of the frame are rounded. During the first half of the video, Lana del Rey is portrayed in black and white. When she starts playing the chorus of the song, the image turns into washed out colors (Picture 1.1), with some scenes filmed under a saturated sunset’s golden light. The images of the young couples are not very sharp and they are filmed with hand held camera.

The 1960s style is represented in Lana del Rey’s hairstyle, with flowers in her hair, cat-eye makeup and her outfit featuring a hippy style white lace dress (Picture 1.2), which is the exact same look that she wears on the album cover of *Lust for Life*. The rest of the actors in the video are also wearing old fashioned clothes. The only props on stage are a bottle of alcohol and cigarettes, which are also recurring elements in her videos and lyrics for the connection they have with the golden era Hollywood stars. The Moon had also a special significance in the 1960s, with the first Moon landing, and thus the images of space were prevalent and important in the public consciousness and deeply connected to sentiments of nationalism. What is very relevant to note about the elements included in this video is that current technological devices as smartphones, laptops and headphones appear in some scenes with the same analog filters than the other storyline supposedly set in the 1960 - 1970s (Pictures 1.3 and 1.4). Featuring these devices break the illusion that the video was filmed decades ago. This means that if the analog aesthetic in this video was used with the intention of situating the viewer transported to a past time, for continuity reasons these scenes should have had a different filter to differentiate them from the ones that do seem to have been filmed in the past. Thus, the reasons to employ this aesthetic in this video are stylistic: the analog filter helps to catch the viewers’ attention because they fit with the singer’s style.
and the nostalgic lyrics of the song. It also creates an association between the audience and the young people that the artist addresses and portrays in her song. Her potential audience will feel represented in the film’s characters as also retro and analog lovers.

Picture 1.3  
Picture 1.4

The first lines of the lyrics are setting up the context of what the song is about, including words like vintage music, kids, past and future: *Look at you kids with your vintage music [...] you’re part of the past, but now you’re the future.* The song is clearly addressed to the “kids” of our present generation, the ones that buy vinyl, dream about past times and play with analog *Instagram* filters. Del Rey wants to make them feel special, representing them in space while singing: *Look at you kids, you know you’re the coolest. The world is yours and you can’t refuse it.* By using analog aesthetic and retro elements the video seems to support and emphasize what Lana Del Rey sings: that nothing really matters except “to be young and in love”. That this is a feeling that many (young) people can relate to, no matter from which generation, from those who have spent their youth driving their cars in the 1960’s, to those who take pictures with their phones in the 21st century. There is a feeling of nostalgia in the way the artist sings in third person about them. Being separated from the young couples in the video puts some metaphoric distance between her and the content of the song. She seems to long for the times when young love was all that mattered and advices the young to enjoy themselves.

Her latest music video after *Love, Lust for Life*, appears to be very similar to the former one, only changing the young couples’ storyline for a story featuring her and the singer The Weeknd (artistic name of the performer Abel Makkonen Tesfaye) running around on top of the Hollywood sign in Los Angeles. Lana del Rey has condensed in her imaginary all things vintage going mainstream: the golden era of Hollywood, the North American flag as a symbol of the American dream, vintage cars, Levi’s jeans, and pop and cultural icons of the time like Elvis Presley, Marilyn Monroe and John F. Kennedy. In 2015, Lana del Rey declared to the magazine *Artistdirect* that “I wasn’t even born in the 50’s but I feel like I was there”. Retro lovers can identify with this statement, and the outcome of this nostalgia for past times is to consume retro and analog media and products. Lana del Rey takes it a step further by creating her own retro scenarios in her videos, where she even shares the screen with Marilyn Monroe in the *Tropico* music video/short film (2013).
The nostalgic American iconography that Lana del Rey portrays in her personal and artistic images are “tokens of nostalgia that have come to symbolize the past greatness of the United States” (Fetveit, 2015: 15), but because of their overuse, they can be perceived as simple patriotic clichés. Behind this nostalgic yearning for the American past, there is a feeling of contemporary crisis. The America that Lana Del Rey portrays doesn’t exist anymore, and she herself has declared in recent interviews not feeling proud of being American anymore after the results of the last national elections.

Lana del Rey has built her musical identity by using retro and analog aesthetics, making it very easy to be recognized in the market for a vintage loving audience that shares the same cultural values that she represents. Nevertheless, it is also important to note that what Lana del Rey has made popular has been used by many alternative artists before, and when she published her first album in 2012, the Instagram analog aesthetic had just become popular, with a mainstream audience already playing with the filtered retro look. Her style could be seen as the result of a consumer demand to have their retro needs represented by a contemporary pop artist. This idea is very well explained by Fetveit (2015), who has also researched Lana del Rey’s music videos and their relationship with analog aesthetics:

“Contemporary precarity that has become a source of nostalgic yearning at present. Her use of precarious mediation is intimately connected to nostalgia and her use of imperfection is similarly linked to the iconoclast form this nostalgia takes, as well as to a deep seated existential ambivalence toward an iconic past which is not anymore what it was” (p. 20).

**Best Coast – Crazy for You (2011)**

Los Angeles pop-rock indie band Best Coast is formed of Bethany Cosentino and Bobb Bruno. Crazy for You is both the name of their first album and the first single of the album. Fans of the low-fidelity (lo-fi) sound, Best Coast have a history of using analog aesthetics to promote their music, releasing their first singles in 7-inch and cassettes. The influences of their music are from the 1960s pop music, with bands like The Beatles and The Beach Boys.
Crazy for You is a true retro music video which combines different vintage elements resulting in a feel-good and entertaining video of less than 2 minutes. The plot is a reproduction of a behind the scenes filming of the same music video the viewer is watching, with the difference that the filming crew is composed of cats. There are several retro elements featured in the filming set, as a tape recorder and diverse analog camera equipment made in cardboard. There is even a shot with a cardboard BlackBerry mobile phone (renamed “Catzberryz”) that helps to situate the action in the early 2000. Subtitles are added with a comical purpose, showing conversations between the singer, the cat-director and between other members of the crew.

The music video shows two different scenes: one is the view of the analog cameras filming the artist performing the song, and the other a behind the scenes view of the set. When offered the view through the analog cameras used to film the singer, the format changes to 4:3 analog TV (Pictures 2.1 and 2.2), showing the subjective view of the cameras in the set (and the cameraman-cat). When the scenes are showing the filming crew and everything that is not recorded on the video, the format changes to an HD 16:9 (Pictures 2.3 and 2.4).

The subjective images of the camera that is filming inside the music video are filmed with a Sony HVC-3000P, a 1980's tube camera; this gives characteristic saturated colors and low resolution (Picture 2.2). The rest of the images are filmed in HD digital cameras and the retro look is achieved in post-production through color grading, making it possible to retain the retro ambience of the video. By shifting between analog and digital depending on the action, the viewer gets a realistic and coherent narration of the story that shows a careful creative direction.
This cheerful, funny and entertaining video fits perfectly with the simple and corny lyrics. It also fits with the cover of their first album, a retro picture with the same colors as those predominant in the filming set of the music video for *Crazy for You* (yellow, red and green), also including a cat (Picture 2.5). Hence, this video supports the alternative retro image that the band wants to portray towards their audience. With the help of the analog and retro aesthetic, it brings powerful associations with alternative culture while catching the viewer's attention by triggering positive and comical emotions in the audience.

**Gold Star – Sonny's Blues (2017)**

In 2017, Marlon Rabenreither released under the artistic name of Gold Star Sonny's Blues' music video, the first single from his second country/folk album, *Big Blue* (2017). This simple music video follows the singer in a trip to a cemetery in Los Angeles, featuring as main elements flowers normally found in graves, a cross from a church, and the views of the city from the cemetery.

The format of the video is almost square. There are several close ups of colorful flowers. The rest of the scenes feature shots of the singer. The zoom is used on several occasions; zooming both in and out. The images are very shaky, filmed with an unsteady hand, giving it a home video feel. The pictures are not always framed or composed in a traditional way, sometimes leaving the singer in a strange position in the frame or even out of it (Pictures 3.1 and 3.2). Fades in and to black are used as transitions, resulting in images where the face of the singer is blended with shots of flowers (Picture 3.3). There is a brief shot of the camera moving towards the standing figure of a girl. Generally, however, one can say that there is no narrative in the video, nor a story or introduction to any character.

*Sonny's Blues* is an example of using real analog technology to obtain the characteristic grain, saturated colors and lo-fi aesthetic of film (Picture 3.4). In an interview with *i-D* magazine, Marlon Rabenreither (2017) explained that the inspiration for the song came from a James Baldwin's short story. He spoke of the music video:
“We wanted to have almost like a home video vibe, just a really simple, stripped-down video. We just borrowed my buddy’s mini DV camera and hung out at Forest Lawns cemetery. I think it ended up aligning up with the mood of the song”.

The Mini DV magnetic tapes were intended for an amateur use, and thus this aesthetic gives the “home video vibes” Rabenreither mentions. This obsolete technology matches the cemetery location, resembling the death of the medium and the end of simple home video productions on tape.

The use of a very strong analog aesthetic masks the lack of narrative in the music video, allowing the viewer to focus the attention in the music and the lyrical elements of the video (the cemetery, the flowers, the colors...). The saturated colors and the hand held images together with the acoustic guitars and the warm voice of Marlon Rabenreither results in an optimal combination and a satisfying, dream-like, and idyllic music video, full of nostalgia for the analog medium.

Gold Star’s music is far from being considered mainstream music, as he is not a popular artist and the music genre he plays (songwriter folk), is not known to be one of the most popular genres of the present time. Even though the low resolution and saturated colors are easy to mimic in digital video, the fact that he decided to shoot with an analog film camera gives a hint of authenticity to his musical image and artistic brand. His brand is constructed via press pictures and both his two album covers shot in analog cameras (Picture 3.5 and 3.6).

One can argue that this particular analog aesthetic suits a musician whose core body of work is based on simple acoustic sounds, with little production (his album Big Blue was recorded live). The home video appearance makes the singer seem down to earth and approachable, like the protagonist in a family video who is not trying to act. In this sense, the artist is presented in opposition to big productions and the phenomenon of celebrity pop stardom, with carefully produced tracks and numerous and complex electronic sounds. He can be considered part of the alternative songwriter scene of the previous century and therefore, fans of classic folk music will likely be his audience, too.
Ariana Grande – *Dangerous Woman* (2016)

Ariana Grande's single *Dangerous Woman* is part of her homonymous, third album released in 2016. She first became famous thanks to her acting career in a teenager series for the television channel *Nickelodeon*, starting her musical carrier in 2010 and publishing her first album, *Yours Truly*, in 2013. Ariana is one of the most influential pop artists in the world among young audiences. She has been part of millionaire advertising campaigns, mass world tours and enjoys great popularity in social media networks.

The music video *Dangerous Woman* features Ariana Grande singing and dancing in underwear in a room. The only elements present in the space are curtains in the background and a couch with pillows. Some scenes are shot in front of a projector and the lights and shadows are projected on the singer's face (Picture 4.1). The video is composed of close-ups and medium range shots of the artist while she sings and looks directly into the camera. The predominant colors are blue and pink in soft lighting.

Filmed with digital equipment, the music video features an analog VHS filter during its entire duration (Picture 4.2). In several aleatory moments during the video, the static noise covers the whole image until it is only possible to distinguish the outline of the singer in the background (Picture 4.3 and 4.4). During the nearly 4 total minutes of the video's duration, it alternates between similar shots corrupted with more or less evident digital glitches. This aesthetic gives the music
video a feeling of home video tape or even a security camera look. It seems like the viewer is watching a private video that is not supposed to be public; making it somehow more elegant and stylish than if the video had an HD digital aesthetic.

Ariana Grande is not known for using analog or retro aesthetic in her videos. Thus, this is not a characteristic aesthetic for her. There is nothing in her artistic image, lyrics or music genre that is related to retro and nostalgia. Moreover, because of her style in the video, it is hard to imagine that the VHS look is intended to take the viewer back to the 1980's and 1990's. Therefore, the VHS filter in this specific video seems to have the function to both make the video appear more original, since there are plenty of music videos featuring a female artist dancing in underwear, and to balance the lack of other elements or narrative in the video. Belonging to the musical genre of mainstream pop, with her main audience being teenage girls, the artist's videos normally feature her looking sexy and attractive in front of the camera, promoting her image as an inspiration to her followers, and with no intention to add a deeper meaning or message to her musical products. This music video has the simple aim of promoting the artist and uses the analog aesthetic as a quick fix to make a simple video look more original.

The Raveonettes – She Owns the Streets (2012)
The Raveonettes are a Danish indie rock band formed of Sune Rose Wagner and Sharin Foo. Their music is characterized by its noisy guitars and two-part vocal harmonies, and they found influences in bands like The Velvet Underground. They released their first album Chain Gang of Love in 2003, and since then they have published 8 studio albums. Even though The Raveonettes are quite well-known outside Denmark, their music style can still be categorized as alternative music.

She Owns the Streets was the second single of the album Observator (2012). The music video is the most accurate representation of the lyrics of a song within the videos reviewed so far. The video acts as a portrayal of the girl described in the lyrics:

See your cool now
It’s a gas now
Watch her dance among the Bowery caps
People feel her
They're so boring
They call the cabs and they want who is fun

She's dancing in the street
Yeah, she’s dancing in the street
Dancing in the street
Yeah she’s dancing, dancing, dancing in the street
Dancing, dancing, dancing in the street

The video features the dancer and follows her during a day: taking a shower, having breakfast, getting ready, going out in the streets, taking the metro and dancing in different places, wearing different outfits. The video also features the two members of The Raveonettes hanging out in the same locations than the protagonist, and even sharing a shot (Picture 5.1). These shots are justified because the lyrics are written in first person and show that it is the band who is describing the dancer: I wanna know her, I wanna ask her, I wanna know where she did go wrong [...] I can't wait to get to know you. They are portraying a troubled, mysterious, and unique character that no one understands, that goes against the mainstream crowd.

The entire music video has a VHS aesthetic. The format is 4:3, and it gives the effect of watching in an old CRT (Cathode Ray Tube) television because of the curved volume around the edges, the visible pixels in the screen, and the channel number in the top right corner of the image (Picture 5.2). There are also frozen frames, displaced frames (Picture 5.3), and frames turned upside down. More predominantly during the video, there are several rewinds that occur as a result of a malfunction in the tape and the loss of quality. This gives the feeling that the tape has worn out after replaying it and rewinding it many times and that there is an invisible hand choosing when to pause or to skip the scenes, adding nostalgia to
the medium's physicality and the emotions that the traces of multiple views represent.

There is a scene where a passerby films the dancer with his smartphone (Picture 5.4). Thus, the audience can understand that the video is shot in the present and the VHS aesthetic does not serve to situate the viewer in the past, but to situate the character in a metaphorical past time, suggesting that she does not belong to the present times. In fact, she is listening to her music in a walkman, a technology completely obsolete nowadays. The band is present in the video while the dancer seems unaware and unconnected to the reality around her. This, together with the analog aesthetic and with the content of the images and lyrics, creates the impression of a very nostalgic video where the spectator can experience feelings of missing the character and the authenticity and alternative life that she represents.

The next music videos of the same album follow the same analog aesthetic that She Owns the Streets. In both Observations and The Enemy, the images play with analog grain, film dust, flickering lights, blurring images and stains of chemicals. In fact, the cover of the album resembles the aesthetic the band decided to use for his work (Picture 5.5). The Raveonettes are not a particularly commercial band and they don’t promote their albums as heavily as other bands of the same genre. Their last album, called Anti-Album, was released by means of publishing one song per
month during 12 months, free to download on their website. In fact, their name comes from a word play inspired by the 1960’s band Ronettes, proving once more that the band is interested in the analog formats and sounds of the past. Thus, their artistic image shown in their music videos aims more for authenticity than for sales and internet views. An audience that appreciates these values will find that the analog aesthetic enhances these qualities and properly represent their music.

Red Hot Chili Peppers – Dani California (2009)
Red Hot Chili Peppers are a famous funk rock American band, and one of the best-selling bands of all time. Active since 1983, they are the most established band of the ones analyzed in this section. For the first single of their 9th album, Stadium Arcadium (2006), they released the music video for Dani California.

The music video features the 4 members of the band personifying different eras of recent music history and different iconic musicians as Elvis Presley, The Beatles, David Bowie, Sex Pixtols and Nirvana among others, as well as going through the representation of genres as Goth, Glam and Psychedelic rock. The band not only imitates the classic bands by dressing like them, but they also play their own song with the same attitude and stage performance as musicians from the respective eras. At the end of the video, the band adopts its real appearance and performs in their own unique style, under their band symbol. The whole action takes place on a stage which changes its appearance depending on which era of music history they try to represent. The cuts in the music video are fast and there are numerous close-ups of the instruments and details of the costumes worn. The video has no relation with the lyrics to the song being played whatsoever, which tell the story of a girl named as the song title.

Dani California uses analog and retro aesthetics to adequately simulate each decade and its characteristic music style. It starts with a 1950's TV look, featuring low resolution and black and white (Picture 6.1). Using a similar aesthetic, the next scene shows a 1960's TV set. In the 1970's, saturated colors appear in the image together with a screen in the background with psychedelic forms and colors. The analog low definition aesthetic is present all the way to the 1990's with an MTV music video performance look and format with the acts of Sex Pistols (Picture 6.3)
and Nirvana. When the Red Hot Chili Peppers appear in their present look, the image is more defined, without any added filters (Picture 6.4), and more precise camera movements.

Thus, the analog aesthetic used in this video is justified as a way of situating the viewer in a specific time and era to adequately create a realistic portrayal of how old classic bands were watched by the viewers in the media corresponding their time. Therefore, the images in every recreated musical era scene are highly nostalgic, and simultaneously entertaining. By condensing all these scenes in a 4-minute music video, the viewer gets a short music history lesson, showing a range of past relevant musicians, who once changed the course of music history. Nostalgia for the past and more glorious times of music is implied in every shot.

This, this music video acts as a tribute video to the classic rock legends that marked a milestone in music history. The audience witness the passing of time through one musical genre to the next one, concluding with the Red Hot Chili Peppers. This shows the band’s influences and puts them on the same level with other legendary musicians, presenting them as the next chapter in rock history. As the Red Hot Chili Peppers are a band liked by a wide range of music audiences, this is a video easy to enjoy for a general public that recognize the musicians that appear in the tribute video and who perhaps admire them, too. This homage can create a bond with the audience by connecting with a public that also respects and admires the classic rock legendary musicians.

**The music video production: Collider – *Just Started* (2017)**

The attached music video¹ is a personal production created to exemplify the present analysis and discussion. The aim of producing the video was to resemble the analog and retro aesthetic outlined in the previous pages and to illustrate how this aesthetic can be used to induce nostalgia, and brand alternative artists. By

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¹ Audiovisual product link: [https://vimeo.com/232330410](https://vimeo.com/232330410) Password: *masterthesis*
Download: [https://www.dropbox.com/s/g7rwp4v8gtngobr/Collider%20%20Just%20Started.mp4?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/s/g7rwp4v8gtngobr/Collider%20%20Just%20Started.mp4?dl=0)
using the analog aesthetic together with other elements in the music video, the band can position themselves within the attention market, so audiences can appreciate the features that uniquely characterize them and distinguish them from others.

The music group in the video is the Copenhagen-based band Collider. The band is composed of Troels Damgaard-Kristensen, Mikkel Trøjborg Fink, Marie Nyhus Janssen and Johan Polder. They describe their music as shoegaze, a subgenre of indie and alternative rock that originated in the United Kingdom in the 1980s. Their music is characterized by dreamy guitar songs with an aggressive undertone. They started playing together in 2015, and they plan on releasing their first album by the end of 2017. As this is the debut music video for the band, there is no previous media image built of Collider to take as a starting point. Therefore, this video will create the first public portrayal of the band. As they draw their inspirations from 1980’s and 1990’s alternative music, they believe that the analog aesthetic of the music videos of bands such as Slowdive or Jesus and Mary Chain defined their music style too.

In order to portray the band in a realistic way, it was decided to place them in a dreamy location within nature and encourage them to be authentic and unperformative versions of themselves, revealing their personalities and personal interactions as bandmates, while playing their song. Although videos of the band playing a concert on a music venue were recorded, these images do not really distinguish them from other bands. Therefore, taking them to an outdoor location was preferred to make a personal and representative video of the band.

The music video shows the four members of Collider in a location during sunset to evoke a hazy, dream-like setting. The locations within the video include: an open field, an elevation of rocks, a wooden staircase and a circle of tree trunks. The specifications of each location allowed the band to interact in different ways. In the opening scenes in the field the band jump and run completely freely. This also operated as the perfect setting to take close ups of the bands faces with the flares of sunset light and general shots of the four members together as an introduction of the band to the viewers. After the opening scene in nature during the first minute of the video, the viewer watches the band playing the song together on a high elevation of rocks that frames the sky as the only background, focusing attention on their musical performance. Following the musical bridge with fast moving close up clips of the instruments, the band jumping, and spontaneous interactions with each other while the female singer films them with a film camera (Picture 7.1), the next location is introduced (Picture 7.2). In this location, the band plays their song on a staircase with the camera filming from below, making it possible for the camera to spin, and framing the sky in the background again (Picture 7.7). In the last location, the band sings surrounded by dark trees, to
conclude with the view of the last minutes of sunset and the band posing while looking directly at the camera.

![Picture 7.1](image1) ![Picture 7.2](image2)

The purpose of the video was to resemble a Super 8 home video aesthetic. The music video was filmed with a Canon 5D Mark II. Edited in Adobe Premiere Pro and color graded with DaVinci Resolve with a Film Convert plug-in. Several things need to be taken into consideration when making a digital video to look like 8 mm film. As a first step, the HD format needs to be changed from 16:9 to 4:3. A very subtle soft, black frame was added so the corners of the image were not too harsh. The software Film Convert has the option to add a Super 8 mm filter with several different films. The film of choice was Kodak P400 Portra for the authentic faded colors that resembled the original videos of 8 mm material found online. A heavy grain and some dust and emulsion stains were added to give the appropriate analog feel to the video. One important thing was to try and reduce the sharpness of the digital camera in the areas in focus of the images to make it appear more realistic according to the limited sharpness of the old Super 8 camera’s lenses. The final look was achieved by balancing blur, increasing saturation, and increasing highlights and midtones. A comparison of two captures before and after the editing can be observed in Picture 7.3.

Regarding the filming technique, the music video features home video characteristics such as handheld camera and heavy use of zoom both in and out. The editing was intended to involve only minimal post-production without special effects. Longer shots appear in the video substituting fast cutting for fast camera movements, use of zoom or change in the action of the image. The members of the band look directly into the camera and interact with it. Thus, the camera as a device is very present in the video, reminiscent of family home videos where the filmmaker is often a family member. This is especially significant when the female singer appears to be shooting the video with an analog camera which is producing the images which the digital software will later attempt to simulate.
An emphasis is placed on the interactions of the band with each other and with the locations. The aim of this was to show a personal and authentic portrayal of the band, including their close relationship with each other and their lively, wild spirit. The song *Just Started* is one of the few of their new songs that has some melodic parts where the guitar changes the distortion for a soft picking with no drums or bass. These moments reveal a more intimate and relaxed side of the band, were longer clips were maintained (Picture 7.4). On the other hand, the parts of the song where there was a distorted guitar solo were selected to show a wilder, more energetic side of the band with numerous short clips of jumps and a lot of action. Therefore, there is a contrast in relation between both the locations and the music, being the music more intense in the location of the trees where the light is darker and the band seems to be more trapped, and less intense when the video takes place in the open field.
Several elements evoke nostalgic feelings. As mentioned prior, the location in nature away from human made constructions is important in evoking nostalgia. The camera moving through tall grass, the buckets of flowers together with the flares of sunset light and the sky as a constant background give a dreamy and idyllic atmosphere to the video (Picture 7.5). The look of the members of the band, with their vintage colorful clothes and their hairstyles also make them seem from a past time. The aesthetic of the female singer Marie is a particularly good example of this (Picture 7.4). The qualities of the materiality of the analog medium, together with the nostalgic feeling of watching a home video and the human trace of the camera movements, perfectly highlight the character of the band, their style, and their music. The analog camera appearing in the music video serves to underline the home video aesthetic and the human hand behind the analog format. The small film camera highlights the 8 mm film aesthetic and gives realism to the shots. By using analog film, Collider are being represented as authentic, unpredictable and imperfect as the medium.

The video doesn’t necessarily situate the band in another time, but distances them from the modern world, as the viewer sees the modern buildings far away in the background of some clips. The close and personal interaction between the camera and the band presents them as a close group of people, in contrast with the representation of mainstream bands that appear as out of reach, idolized pop stars. It is also uncommon to see a band smiling and being silly in front of the camera. There is a relation in the way the shots are filmed, on one side the front close ups of the bands during the moments of the video where they are spontaneous and active (Picture 7.6) and on the other side the low angle compositions when they are performing their song and the tone is more serious (Picture 7.7). Thus, the video tries to find a balance between the funny and serious character of the band and between the softer and harder musical parts of the song. The music video aims to position the band as independent musicians with a strong unique personality, while simultaneously down to earth with a strong connection between each other. This is highlighted by the positive nostalgic feelings of the non technological, simpler past times that are suggested in the music video.

![Picture 7.6](image1.png) ![Picture 7.7](image2.png)
PART III: DISCUSSION

This section firstly puts the most important theoretical points in context with the previous analysis of music videos that serve as examples of the different uses of analog and retro aesthetics to achieve different aims. Secondarily, the discussion focuses on using the findings of the research to give answers to the several questions that arise during the process.

After the theory review and the analysis, some connections have been made in the uses of the analog and retro aesthetic to produce a new music video. Thus, it is argued that a deeper understanding of this aesthetic in a theoretical level can be a helpful tool in approaching the task of producing music videos. The points discussed in the present section can serve as guidelines for a comprehensible and appropriate use of the analog and retro aesthetic for music video producers. Before that, there are several connections worth examining between the videos analyzed and their use of the analog and retro aesthetics.

Discussion of the music video analysis

Lana del Rey represents nostalgia in all her videos through a fantasized past that she has not experienced, adding nationalistic connotations to build her identity inspired by the ideal of the golden era Hollywood’s stars. Nevertheless, this image is corrupted when in her music video Love a mobile phone and a computer appear on the screen under the same analog filter than the previous scenes. This also happens in The Raveonettes’ music video She Owns the Streets, but in a way that it seems less out of place than in Del Rey’s video. This could be because, in Love, the protagonists of the video belong to our time and it seems like a contradiction how they are previously introduced with vintage elements like their clothes and their old cars but afterwards, they appear taking pictures of each other with their own smartphones. On the other hand, in She Owns the Streets the analog aesthetic is used to portray a character that metaphorically lives in another time and it is not part of the society, and thus the fact that someone is taking a picture of her with his phone underlines that others view her as an odd person, emphasizing the distance between them. Lana del Rey’s inclusion of digital devices in her music video Love could be justified as a product placement strategy from an advertising contract, and this shows that the artist used the analog aesthetic in this music video without much thought, moved by marketing priorities.

A more thoughtful use of the retro aesthetic and the election of the moment where the analog aesthetic appears can be seen in Best Coast’s music video Crazy for you. The analog retro is justified when the video shows the subjective view of analog
cameras filming the singer. The rest of the images, although maintaining the retro look, are shot in digital and clearly show the difference between the two formats. The use of retro in this specific video visually creates a sense of continuity because it matches the narrative of the video. The analog aesthetic in Lana del Rey’s music videos also contributes to create a sense of continuity in the way that all her music videos play with the same visual elements and they could all be seen as belonging to the same movie, in which she is always the protagonist and the story she tells is always the same. Best Coast uses retro nostalgia as a brand for their alternative music but in a less compromising way than Lana del Rey, just taking the retro colors and North American clichés and playing with them to create associations with the alternative culture, as opposed to Lana del Rey, who uses the aesthetic as a revival of old American values that creates a sentiment of heritage and tradition that connects to the past.

Ariana Grande uses the VHS aesthetic for stylistic reasons to catch the viewer’s attention and to add some differentiation to an otherwise typical video by pop female singers that lacks creativity and narration. The Raveonettes on the other hand use VHS in She Own the Street as a tool to return to the past and express nostalgia in a more original and justified interpretation of the lyrics of the song. What both music videos have in common is both use malfunctions in specific spots in the video as if they had been replayed or rewound, which show traces of appreciation and pleasure (Schrey, 2014).

Gold Star also uses the analog aesthetic as a substitute for a narrative. Unlike Ariana Grande, his music and lyrics perfectly fits with the analog aesthetic because they are already nostalgic, and the analog images serve as a perfect triggering of emotions in the viewer. There is nothing nostalgic in Ariana Grande musical image, lyrics or music, and thus, if the video had been shot with a digital aesthetic, the result would not have been much different. Gold Star’s use of analog aesthetic together with a non-narrative video is coherent because the elements in the video and the music are highly lyrical in a visual sense, and for these elements to stand out it is necessary that the narrative is turned down, so it doesn’t take over. Thus, a lack of narrative does not necessarily mean that a music video is more boring, but that other elements in the video are more expressive that the narrative and those are the ones the viewer should focus on.

The music video produced for Collider, Just Started, also turns down the narrative to allow other elements to stand out like the location, the interactions between the band members and more importantly, the colors and the analog aesthetic. This music video also has in common with other videos (like Gold Star’s Sonny’s Blues) that the analog aesthetic is used in connection with elements in the nature and a technology free environment. Idyllic elements like the sun, flowers and evoking landscapes create a context where technology is absent and it is also not missed. Since a non-technological environment is so rare nowadays, nostalgia is induced in
these scenarios that connect to the past by slowing down and focusing in the quality of the human interaction with nature. Nostalgia in this case serves as a defense mechanism of the accelerated rhythm of contemporary life, the high pace of the daily life that technology has forced into society. Thus, these videos act as mediators between the memories of a slower and more sensible past and the contemporary times.

Red Hot Chili Peppers pay tribute to old musicians and rock history and reinforce their own brand at the same time, catching the viewer’s attention by connecting with an audience that also admires the music genres and musicians represented in the video. In the same way, Lana del Rey also tributes her influences in many of her music videos to the point that she has appropriated the aesthetic, look, and image of these musicians and pop icons. Red Hot Chili Peppers, on the other hand, do not personally imitate them in their musical image; they have created their own image which is only reinforced by borrowing the music image of past bands for this specific music video Dani California, which is very different to their other music videos. At the same time, when the Red Hot Chili Peppers appear in the video at the end of the rock history timeline created, they are positioning themselves as the successors of the recognized artist they are paying tribute to. They have played with all the characteristic aesthetics of each band and at the end they also present themselves with a unique style and more importantly, with their big symbol in the background of the stage.

Thus, the previous analysis shows that the videos analyzed serve as examples of the five reasons for the use of the analog and retro aesthetic explained in detail by Vernallis (2004) and Højbjerg (2011):

- To cover a lack of narration and as a substitute for a story.
- To create associations with alternative culture.
- To visually create a sense of continuity.
- To catch the viewer’s attention.
- To trigger emotions in the audience.

Furthermore, the nostalgic connotations found in the videos served, as explained in the work of Niemeyer (2014), Boym (2002) and Buljubašić (2016), to:

- Connect with the history and the past, including fantasies of the past.
- Engage viewers with a feeling of being part of a community or a group.
- As a defense mechanism when there is a crisis of temporality.
- Produce heritage and sense of inclusion by creating identity.
- Position the video in the specific market and audience.
- Create a tribute.

The analysis has confirmed further theoretical claims. It supports the idea that the overuse of specific settings can counteract the lack of narrative in a video, as
explained by Vernallis (2014): “a visual touch can help to define the music video’s world” (p. 158), in this case being the analog and retro the visual touches. In the present analysis, both music and lyrics have been considered in relation to the images. The technique of commutation that Vernallis (2014) suggests when analyzing music videos has served to verify whether the use of the analog aesthetic was justified, and if it was possible to be substituted with a digital look without losing meaning. The present analysis has also paid attention to the frequency and specific place of the analog aesthetic appearing in each music video and its ability to change the temporal and special sense of the action taken in the video, making it look like if it was filmed in another era. Evoking a specific positive emotion, in the present case being the emotion nostalgia, is one of the tips for creating the brand of an artist. Analog aesthetics have been proved to efficiently be used with this aim. Nostalgia is often inspired by a “discontent with the present” (Fetveit, 2015: 14), and this discontent can come from the fast pace that technology dictates and the predictability of the almost perfect digital medium together with other cultural, political or social aspects. All these different uses of retro and analog aesthetic, as well as the many functions of nostalgia, have also been analyzed in relation to how they serve to position the music video in the specific target group, often this being aimed to an alternative audience.

Discussion of the research questions

After reviewing the connections between the theory and the music videos analyzed, it is possible to give comprehensive answers to the questions outlined at the beginning of the present research. The research has indicated that the use of the analog and retro aesthetics in music videos create a feeling of nostalgia that potentially contributes to the engagement with the audience, and thus, the hypothesis of the present research is supported. Furthermore, together with the theoretical review and the music videos analyzed as examples, the several interpretations and purposes of using analog and retro aesthetic in music videos and the ways they can relate to nostalgia have been highlighted, answering the research question set out in the introduction. While the answer to the research question is clearly supported, the secondary questions of the research lay out some further discussion that derives from the main argument.

After examining the varied significances of the analog and retro aesthetics in different type of videos, it seems relevant to ask whether the retro aesthetic can be called an alternative trend anymore and if its use has lost original value and meaning. Since tools for creating imitations of analog images are within everyone’s reach, these imitations (or representations) of analog images can be found in all kinds of media channels, making it difficult to distinguish whether they are being
used as part of the retro trend or as a medium to express a message. In the examples of music videos reviewed in the previous sections, it has been possible to distinguish between music videos that used the retro aesthetic to visually support the lyrics and music created by the artists (The Raveonettes, Gold Star), and videos that used it with no apparent meaning in relation to the music, genre or artist they are accompanying (Ariana Grande). This shows that alternative and commercial bands use the analog aesthetic differently. The alternative bands seem to use the analog aesthetic in coherence with their work belonging to a more independent music genre with an alternative audience. Moreover, this aesthetic remains consistent across more than one of their videos and in their album covers (Gold Star, The Raveonettes). On the other hand, mainstream pop artists like Ariana Grande seem to use analog out of context, since the aesthetic did not match the previous music videos or her musical image. In Ariana Grande's case, analog VHS was used to differentiate her video among other very similar videos of mainstream artists. This supports the idea that Grande is using retro as a fashionable aesthetic and that the alternative connotations of retro can also be used by mainstream pop artists to position themselves in their respective mainstream market by differentiating from the rest of artists that normally use a digital aesthetic.

Lana del Rey indiscriminately uses retro aesthetics to build the musical image and brand that her and her discography has created fairly independently from her music, with the ultimate goal of selling more records. Although Lana del Rey’s image could be labelled “alternative”, as a consequence of a sympathy, and even an overuse of clichés, it is perceived as a mere fashion tactic to create visually recognizable images that broad audiences can easily recognize as hers. Thus, there is a relation between the use of retro as a trend or as an artistic medium to emphasize a message, and the musicians being mainstream or alternative.

Depending on the purposes behind the use of this aesthetic, retro can be categorized as either alternative or mainstream. Either way, the use of analog and retro aesthetics inspires nostalgia. As it has previously been explained, nostalgia is a powerful selling tool that can be used to position a product in the market and to attract a specific potential audience. For this, it exists the possibility for audiovisual producers to use the nostalgic analog look as a fairly easy way to differentiate their product in the present paradigm where the digital look is the norm. Nevertheless, this is something easy to recognize in videos that are missing defining elements (a narrative, an original mise-en-scène, metaphors or lyrical aspects). Many music videos do not entail interpretation, but others use metaphors and complex narration that invite the viewer to make interpretation. Not all videos analyzed in the present research used the retro and analog to express nostalgia or the desire to bring back the qualities of the analog medium, instead the aim was to catch the attention of the audience by following the retro trend. Thus, the retro aesthetic can serve to redefine the target group towards an alternative audience when used in coherence with other elements like the musical genre, the lyrical connotations, the
music video narrative, the lyrics and also the artist's brand and image. Likewise, when the aesthetic is not used in coherence with those elements, it can serve to position the product as more alternative or original inside a mainstream market.

Nostalgia relates to identity, and audiences use music to develop their own identity to express themselves and their values, as well as developing feelings of belonging to the same social group. To create their identity, bands, like individuals, tend to imitate the look and characteristic of what others have done in the past, especially those that inspire and influence their work. As seen in the music video of the Red Hot Chili Peppers, by “borrowing” branding qualities of cult bands, the band is transmitting those positive perceptions into their own brand by means of a nostalgic tribute. Thus, audiences that also like those other music groups will have a reason to believe that they have something in common with the band and hence they will like their music too. Other musicians express nostalgia about the past times, when the music genre their music is categorized as was more popular, and find in the analog medium a way to identify themselves in this context, like the folk songwriter Gold Star does in his videos.

In most of the music videos analyzed, different digital effects are used to make the digital files look like film, with the exception of some videos that used real analog cameras to get the most authentic look. One of the first questions in the present research was why, when HD technology is so affordable, digital images are distorted to look like analog, and why are these images so aesthetically pleasing. The answer is found in the need for humanizing the otherwise perfect and predictable mechanical look of digital images. There are many qualities that are perceived in the analog medium that have human associations: unpredictable, material, authentic, perishable... The analog medium has given memories to many generations in the format of home videos, and users and spectators will always be connected to a nostalgic human feeling of longing and belonging. In many ways, audiences experience longing for those devices that brought pictures and videos for the first time in their lives and thus, they rebel against the technological obsolescence and the consumerist need of buying the last model of technological devices available in the market.
CONCLUSIONS

Analog aesthetics characteristics that were once considered disadvantages are now appreciated among media audiences, and there is a feeling of nostalgia for the times when technology was more human. It is evident that popular culture is obsessed with the retro imaginary and the obsolete analog mediums. The overuse of the analog and retro aesthetics might have become mainstream in regard to how easily they can be simulated, and how common it is to find them in media products. Nevertheless, these aesthetics still serve as a powerful tool to re-evaluate concepts related to past and present, and cultural concerns, among others. Moreover, its visual, nostalgia-evoking appeal alone is enough reason to be used in digital recorded images.

The present thesis has focused on the significance of the use of analog and retro aesthetics in today’s media products, specifically in music videos. The purpose of this research is to give answer to why the analog aesthetic is still so present in music videos, more specifically, in a contemporary context where digital high definition technology is within everyone’s reach. During the process, different findings have been discovered regarding meanings and purposes of using this aesthetic.

The first part of the research is centered on the theoretical framework. The different literature reviewed served to build a theoretical background in order to explain, and connect the research question with the bases of music video analysis, position in the attention market, significance of the use of retro aesthetics, differences between the analog and the digital medium, and the functions of nostalgia. It is interesting to mention some of the most relevant findings in this section, bringing some light in the current music video and retro and analog aesthetics research:

- Retro aesthetic was found to be used as a substitute for a story, to create associations with alternative culture and experimental filmmaking, to complement an artist image or brand, to create continuity in the music video narrative, and to help catching the viewer’s attention by differentiating from the expected digital look.
- The nostalgia feeling that retro aesthetics can trigger can function to connect with the audience by exploiting or reinventing the past. At the same time, nostalgia carries connotations related to heritage, tradition and identity. Furthermore, nostalgia can engage with the audiences by making them feel as part of a community, which is important when trying to position a product in its specific market. Creating a tribute to the past is also a function of nostalgia for differentiation in the market. Lastly, nostalgia serves as a defense mechanism that comes out when audiences experience
a crisis of temporality that can be caused by a discontent with the present, and idealization of the past.

- This crisis of temporality is put in context with the analog medium nostalgia that the technological shift has provoked by feelings of instability and precariousness. The divide between analog and digital, and materiality and immateriality is important for understanding the trend of retro aesthetics and why audiences are consuming analog images. The answer is found in the human traces of the analog medium that are perceived as familiar and easy to connect with the own human experience: imperfection, unpredictability, perishable.

The second part of the research consisted in the analysis of six music videos that served as examples to the different uses and expressions of analog and retro aesthetics mentioned in the theory section. The videos were analyzed with a focus on aesthetics and visual elements. The analysis pointed at what type of analog aesthetic was visible in the video, when and how often did it appear and how it suggested nostalgia. The artist’s image, music genre and type of audience were also analyzed in order to find out how the music video was positioning the artist within the market. This section was completed with the analysis of the music video production for the music band Collider, offering a new perspective in the topic and further discussion.

The third part of the research consisted in a discussion of the several connections existing among the different music videos analyzed, pointing at the theory findings to give significance to the different uses and purposes of the analog and retro aesthetics. The section concluded with a review of the research questions and a discussion of the answers offered. As a brief summary:

- In order to position a product in the market it is necessary to differentiate and build a unique image in opposition to similar products. Analog and retro aesthetics are very useful to differentiate a specific music video from others, but they are used differently whether the artist belongs to the alternative or mainstream trend.

- Analog and retro aesthetics are often used by mainstream artists to merely follow the trend of vintage-looking images, and to distinguish themselves from other mainstream videos in their specific market that commonly use digital aesthetic. On the other hand, alternative musicians often use the aesthetic in coherence with their music, brand and the rest of the visual elements appearing in the music video in order to support a specific message.

After reviewing the main findings of this research, the hypothesis stated at the beginning of the research has been tested and proved to be correct, and the feeling of nostalgia is indeed a powerful tool to engage the audience with a specific music
video through the use of analog and retro aesthetics. Furthermore, answers have been offered to the secondary research questions.

All in all, one can speculate that filmmakers will continue using analog film because they believe in the incapability of digital to fake the analog look. Nevertheless, film is not always an option for both economical and practical reasons. Although HD cameras are widely available, some bands don’t have the resources to film heavily produced music videos. In this case, the analog aesthetic is convenient for musicians who just started their career and have a lower budget for production. This is the case of the music video created for the band Collider. Low-cost productions will always have the option of using grain and other analog features to achieve the many positive associations and feelings that these aesthetics suggest, helping a debut band to find its target group and market.
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MUSIC VIDEOS:


